

# Endangered mussels reproducing at hatchery

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Endangered freshwater mussels appear to be doing well at a hatchery in Wales, sparking hopes that they have a future in the rivers of Britain.

Seventy pearl mussels at the Mawddach hatchery produced millions of larvae a year ago, The Independent reports. The hatchery now has 70,000 young mussels.

The number of mussels had dropped catastrophically because of water pollution, dredging and poaching. The breeder mussels at the hatchery were found in rivers in Wales.

The pearl mussel can live to be more than 100 years old, producing millions of young. But scientists had found that many colonies consisted only of old mussels and believe that pollution and other factors were interfering with reproduction.

The mussel appears to be very sensitive to water pollution. Loss of native fish may also have been a factor since the larvae spend part of their lives as parasites on trout or salmon.

The pearl mussel has a storied past. Queen Elizabeth I, in many of her portraits, is wearing freshwater pearls.

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